584 The influence of elders is decisive with regard to marriage; the parents or their deputees take part in many customs pertaining to courtship and their choice is practically binding for their children--sons and [163] daughters alike. The number of children per family averaged 3.87 among the peasants between the two world wars, with a tendency to a slight decrease ever since.

596 In the patriarchal family structure of the Magyar peasantry, the influence of elders is, in most aspects of social life, decisive. Not only does the child grow up and is taught in the family, but, in many cases, he continues to live together with his parents under their benevolent but authoritarian rule. The sometimes excessive conservatism of the Magyar peasant has its roots in his everyday life in the family. The regimented family life, moreover, imbues him with a keen sense of duty and discipline.

The importance of the influence exerted by the peasant family upon [867] the individual is obvious. The family not only shapes the moral individual more than any formal education in the city, but also determines, to a considerable extent, his attitude toward the actual regime. The peasant's religion, his way of life, and his techniques of production are now being attacked by multifarious governmental forces propagating rationalism, industrialization, and collectivization. Against this propaganda, the family life teaches Christianity, love of the soil, and especially the love of one's own land.